

***TOWN OF NEWFIELDS BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2007***

The meeting was called to order at 6:55pm. Selectmen present were: James McIlroy and Michael Woodworth. Wes Moore joined the meeting in progress. Others present were: Chief Reed, Lt. Gould, Pam Abbott, Chip Purrington, Jay Somers of Comcast, Bill Davis, Dwight Davis, and Dan Conner.

Chief Reed advises that he will be applying for the Speed and DWI grants again this year. The Speed Grant will run Monday through Friday in the early morning and late afternoon. One DWI Grant will run on Friday and Saturday nights and another Grant on the fourth of July weekend. These grants cover 60 hours each.

Newmarket, Stratham, and Newfields will be conducting alcohol sale compliance checks. This is funded by the Justice Department. No money will come back to the Town via fines unless a juvenile is involved.

All fees are included in the Grants including salary, FICA, and the New Hampshire Retirement System contribution.

James, Michael, Wes are all in agreement that these grants should be pursued.

Steve McAulay is graduating from the Police Academy on Friday, March 30th and the Selectmen are invited to attend. Steve will be back on duty in Newfields in April.

Chief Reed is still looking for part-time police officers.

Chief Reed has been reviewing his budget bi-weekly and is unhappy that the legal fees associated with the Department of Labor cases and the payment to two former police officers have been taken out of his budget. He stated that unless the funds come from other than his budget, he will have to reduce his staff. The Selectmen will review this at a later meeting.

Chief Reed is also unhappy that the health insurance costs are being taken from his budget. Treasurer Don Doane and Nancy will review this situation tomorrow and make any necessary adjustments.

The Trustees of the Trust Funds met with the Selectmen to bring them up to date on the Capital Reserve Funds transferred to their control. All have been transferred from the Treasurer to the Trustees with the exception of the Town Hall Expendable Fund which

will be transferred shortly. The Highway Fund has been expended in full and the Trustees will set up an Emergency Management Expendable Trust Fund.

There was discussion about the Septic/Sewer Funds. Pam believes the Water Department is aware of this fund and feels that there was an agreement when the Water Department separated from the Town that the funds would stay in the care and control of the Trustees. Pam Abbott will check with the Department of Revenue with regard to the rules and regulations of using or transferring the funds. Wes will contact the Local Government Center for their opinion on who the money belongs to, who can spend it, and does the entire Town need to vote on expenditures?

Nancy was asked to find the history of the separation of the Water/Sewer Department from the Town for the Selectmen to review at a later meeting. James mentioned that Fran Lane might have been a Selectmen around this time and may have some background information on the separation.

Jay Somers from Comcast met with the Selectmen and the Cable Committee to discuss the upcoming renewal contract. He will ask for a three month extension to present a new ten year contract. Bill Davis asked if that was a realistic time frame and Jay agreed to ask for a six month extension instead. This allows time for the Cable Committee, the Selectmen, and Town Counsel to review the contract.

Eighty-five percent of the contract language is standard and the remaining fifteen percent may be negotiated. Jay was asked why Comcast wants a contract and he stated that the State requires an agreement in order to operate and a contract is considered an asset to Comcast. There are legal steps to take if the Town cannot come to an agreement with Comcast, but Comcast is still allowed to operate in Newfields. A last step to come to an agreement would be a Court determination that the Town needs to accept the agreement. Comcast has never been thrown out of a town, but has been denied licenses. The license is “non-exclusive” so that other cable companies would be allowed to serve Newfields in addition to Comcast. Satellite does not require a license to operate.

Cable costs will continue to rise as Comcast needs to pay more for specialty channels such as ESPN.

Wes asked why a customer has to pay for 120 channels when that customer only watches 3 or 4 channels on a regular basis. Jay said it is like purchasing a newspaper – you can’t pick and choose which sections to purchase, you must buy the whole newspaper. A la carte does not work in cable pricing as you would end up paying the same price for 120 channels versus 3 or 4 channels.

Jay said that high definition will be on more channels in a few years and is available via cable or over the airwaves however you do need to have a converter box. All of Newfields is wired with hi-fiber optic.

Jay also stated that when cable services slows down because of the number of people on line, Comcast will add another “node” to keep the bandwidth and service stable.

Jay was asked what other towns are asking for while negotiating a renewal contract with Comcast and he stated most are looking for access to equipment to broadcast Town and department meetings, sports events, etc. Comcast gives free access to schools and libraries. James asked about free Town Office access and that will be discussed with Comcast and the Cable Committee.

Access to Channel 22 was discussed and Jay mentioned that other Towns have formed an Access Committee in order to have access to other Town’s programming. Newfields does not want to generate programming, but only to view what is broadcast on Channel 22 such as the Cooperative School District Meetings, the Exeter Area High School Meetings, and sportscasts. This is another item to be discussed with the Cable Committee and Comcast.

Bill Davis said that Jeff Feenstra suggested that the Town hold a Public Hearing with a Comcast Representative to answer any questions that residents may have, address their concerns, and educate the residents about Comcast. The Selectmen agreed that this would be a good thing to do.

Jay stated that we should have a preliminary agreement from Comcast next week.

Dan Conner met with the Selectmen to give them a Certificate of Insurance for the rental of the Town Hall by Conner Bottling and to express his displeasure with the rental process. Dan said you can no longer just write your name on the board, and give the Town a check for \$50.00. Dan feels that the Town is denying access to individuals who want to rent the Town Hall, because individuals cannot purchase the insurance the Town requires. In fact, insurance coverage may be purchased through the Town’s Insurance carrier if a resident is unable to obtain coverage elsewhere.

Wes explained that most Towns require Certificates of Insurance in order to protect the Town from lawsuits. Dan feels the insurance should be included in the application fee and not be left up to the renter to find insurance coverage.

The Selectmen will review the rental policy and Wes will contact Primex for pricing on a separate liability policy for Town Hall rentals.

Wes made a motion to nominate James McIlroy as Chairman of the Board. Michael seconded the motion and the motion passed with all in favor.

James made a motion to nominate Wes Moore as the Selectmen’s representative to the Conservation Commission. Michael seconded the motion and it passed with all in favor.

James made a motion to appoint Michael Woodworth as the Selectmen's representative to the Planning Board. Wes seconded the motion and the motion passed with all in favor.

Wes made a motion to nominate Michael Woodworth as Welfare Officer. James seconded the motion and the motion passed with all in favor.

It was decided to post the minutes of the February 27, 2007 unapproved. This is necessary because there was not a quorum to approve the minutes.

Wes made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 6, 2007 meeting as written. James seconded the motion and it passed with both in favor.

As the Warrant Article passed, the Town of Newfields offers for sale the old Post Office Building located at 75 Main Street, Newfields for the next ninety days at a price no less than \$300,000.

The Selectmen are forming the Dispatch Advisory Committee and encourage any resident interested in serving on the committee to contact the Town Office.

The application by Conner Bottling Works to rent the Town Hall was signed by the Selectmen.

The following residents took the Oath of Office from the Town Clerk and their appointments were signed by the Selectmen:

Brian Knipstein, Road Agent
Larry Shaw, Building Inspector
Lauren Hill, Conservation Committee Member
Steven Shope, Conservation Committee Member

The invoice from Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire for legal services on the Cole property easement was signed by the Selectmen to be forwarded to the Conservation Commission.

A six month report required by NOAA on the status of the Piscassic Greenway purchase was written by Brian Hart. This will be reviewed by the Selectmen and sent to NOAA once they approve the report. This should be approved at next week's meeting.

The MS2 – Report of Appropriations Actually Voted was signed by the Selectmen.

A denial letter was sent to the Town Clerk for her request for full tuition to attend the New England Municipal Clerks Institute. They did approve partial payment of \$375.00 and encouraged her to apply for financial aid for the balance of the cost of the tuition.

Property Tax Abatements were signed for James and Daragh Shannon, Colleen Chaffe MacDonald, and Donna and Robert Hanscom.

Correspondence from the Lane Law Offices was reviewed.

Correspondence from Mitchell & Bates Professional Association was reviewed.

The Town did not receive any bids on the used roof slate which is for sale. Nancy was asked to contact W. S. Goodrich in Epping to see if they are interested in purchasing it. She was also asked to contact Frank A. Beliveau Auctioneers for information on auctioning the slate.

The Selectmen gave permission to issue the checks for the Human Service Requests which were approved at the Town Elections.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Spencer